

F 44
.W57 R4





הנְּצָרָה תְּבִיבָה

A N

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

West Lebanon Congregational Church and Society,

NOVEMBER 8, 1874.

BY A. B. RICH, PASTOR.

"

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.

CONCORD, N. H.:

PRINTED BY THE REPUBLICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION.

1874.

F44
W57 R4

315748
23

31

SERMON.

1 SAMUEL vii: 11, 12.

“AND THE MEN OF ISRAEL WENT OUT OF MIZPEH, AND PURSUED THE PHILISTINES, AND SMOTE THEM, UNTIL THEY CAME UNDER BETH-CAR. THEN SAMUEL TOOK A STONE, AND SET IT BETWEEN MIZPEH AND SHEN, AND CALLED THE NAME OF IT EBEN-EZER, SAYING, HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US.”

It would be both unphilosophical and superficial, in giving the natural history of a choice fruit-tree, to speak only of its height and size, the form it has assumed in the progress of its growth, and the characteristics of its fruit. We wish to know, as well, where it originated, and by whose culture it has been brought to its present state of perfection. We trace the variety back to the nursery of some distinguished pomologist, learn the circumstances under which it came into notice, the different names by which it has been known, the care and culture that have been expended upon it to bring it to the present state of perfection. And we come to estimate the value of our particular tree, not simply by the annual supply of delicious

fruit it bears, but by the circumstances of its origination, and the labors of other hands that have transplanted, pruned, and guarded it, before it had a place in our orchard. Let these things be an allegory.

The church of Jesus Christ on earth has a history: and each particular local church stands in spiritual relations with it. It has not an independent history. It has a germinal relation with some church or churches that preceded it. The life that had been begotten in human hearts by the Divine Spirit under other relations, is having a new development under new relations. There is a sense in which the local church is new, a higher sense in which it is old—as old, indeed, as the establishment of a church on earth, as the idea of a church in the mind of its head. Each local church, therefore, has a history that runs back of the date of its origin, as found in its records,—a hidden history, like the roots of a tree that run under ground, a part of the tree, as truly as the trunk, but out of sight.

In proposing to write out the history of this church, I cannot resist the temptation to go back of Nov. 8, 1849—back even of the organization of the parent church—to the influences that moulded the characters of the original settlers of this town. So far, at least, we can easily trace the roots of the tree that has been growing here on the banks of the Connecticut for the last quarter of a century.

Our thoughts are turned to "the land of steady habits"—to the interior of Connecticut; and we are almost surprised to find the towns of Enfield, Windsor, Hartford, Norwich, Lebanon, Woodstock, Meriden, Lyme, Bristol, Franklin, Danbury, Canaan, and Andover crowded as thickly together there as they are in this latitude in the valley of the same "Long River."

It suggests other relationships, running back to colonial days.

I know not why the name of Mansfield was not transferred to this locality, as the original settlers of this town were from the adjoining towns of Mansfield and Lebanon. The first meeting of the eighty-two grantees, under the charter obtained from the royal governor, Benning Wentworth, was held in Mansfield. But the majority of these belonging to Lebanon, they voted to call the town by this musical Scripture name. I presume their children have approved their decision.

As to the moral and intellectual character of the first settlers of the town, we can judge somewhat by reference to the clergy under whose ministry they had been educated.

The Mansfield colonists had sat for seventeen years under the preaching of Rev. Richard Salter, a graduate of Harvard college. After his graduation, Mr. Salter studied medicine, and became "a skilful practitioner." His attention was then called to the min-

istry, which, after a course of preparatory study, he entered. Declining a call from one of the Boston churches, he settled in Mansfield, and remained there until his death—forty-one years. He was elected a Fellow of Yale college, and received from that institution the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He is said to have been “a man of more than ordinary intellectual powers, and to have ranked, in this respect, among the first ministers of his day in Connecticut.”

It may be of interest to know that it was from him that the Rev. Richard Salter Storrs, late of Braintree, Mass. (the father of the distinguished divine of the same name in Brooklyn, N. Y.), received both his name and his education.

Remembering now the reverence felt by all classes for the clergy a century and a quarter ago, and the influence they exerted upon the intellectual and moral *status* of a community, in the absence of good educational institutions, and we can gauge quite accurately the mental and moral traits of a Mansfield colony in 1761.

The Lebanon colony was in nothing inferior, judged by the same standard. For twenty-six years before their *hegira* they had enjoyed the religious training of the Rev. Eleazer Wheelock, of whom Trumbull, a personal friend, says,—“His preaching and addresses were close and pungent, and yet winning beyond almost all comparison, so that his audience would

be melted even into tears before they were aware of it."

His labors were greatly promotive of revivals of religion. They covered the years when Whitefield was making his flying visits through New England. Dr. Wheelock welcomed the great revivalist to his pulpit, and was in full sympathy with him in the great awakening. "So fervent was his zeal, that in one year 'he preached a hundred more sermons than there are days in the year.'"

Several years before the colony left his congregation to settle in this town, Dr. Wheelock commenced a family school, to eke out his scanty salary. Ere long a Mohegan Indian boy, Samson Occum, became connected with the school. His subsequent conversion and distinguished labors as a preacher turned Dr. Wheelock's thoughts so much towards the Indians as to lead him to change the plan of his school. It grew at length into "Moor's Indian Charity School," taking its name from that of a liberal benefactor—a generous farmer of Mansfield.

Years roll by: the school is mainly composed of Indian children. At length, some eight years after the departure of the New Hampshire colony, in August, 1770, the venerable minister and teacher, with the charter in his hand of Dartmouth college—"vox clamantis in deserto"—followed his former parishioners into the wilderness, and transferred his school to Han-

over,—“he and his wife and daughters living in a log cabin eighteen feet square, and his sons and students in booths of hemlock boughs, until a dwelling-house and college could be erected.”

Thus was renewed his acquaintance with the former members of his parish, and his influence over them continued until his death. He presided over the college from 1770 to 1779, “and conferred the honors of the college on seventy-two young men, of whom thirty-nine became ministers of the gospel.”

Perhaps I am occupying too much space with the influences that moulded the characters and habits of our fathers: but how could I have said less?

No record has come down to us respecting the spiritual history of the colony during the first three years of its existence. No doubt there were praying souls here, and closets, and family altars, in rude dwellings scattered throughout the town. No doubt, when occasions served, they sang and prayed together, for they had come up from some of the most thrilling revival scenes which have been enjoyed in New England.

But on the 13th of May, 1765, when, it is supposed, the town contained only about twenty families, measures were taken to secure the preaching of the word. It is the earliest extant record of the town.

“At y^e motion of Mr. Asa Kilbourne, queryd, whether we will have a minister in the town this summer or not? Voted in the affirmative.

“Voted, that we first send subscriptions to y^e neighboring towns, and

get what we can subscribed; and what remains wanting to supply the pulpit six months, will stand 'sponsible for; to be paid at y^e end of said six months."

What success they had in raising subscriptions or finding a preacher does not appear. The action of the town, above referred to, shows an appreciation of the ministry of the gospel, and a willingness to "stand 'sponsible" for whatsoever pecuniary sacrifice it might involve.

We pass three years, during which they have occasional preaching, no doubt, but no settled means of grace, save the reading of the word and a holy walk with God on the part of the devout,—and we come to 1768, one of the most important years in the early history of the colony. Three events mark it as such.

First, The town voted to build a meeting-house, but so scattered were the population, so difficult a matter was it found to be to harmonize the different views respecting the location, that the structure did not arise until 1772, four years after the vote of the town to build it. It was a small house, 34 by 48 feet, erected on the height of ground about midway between the cottage of Richard B. Kimball and the residence of the late Luther Alden, on the south side of the street.

The *second* interesting event of the year was a vote of the town to extend a call to a Mr. Wales to become their minister. His answer to the call was couched in such terms as to give great offence. They refused

to receive him as their religious teacher, and declared "null and void all proceedings in relation to him."

The next and *most important* item of the year was the organization of the first church of the town, with the aid and advice of the ministers of Cornish and Charlestown. It consisted of six members,—all of them men. These three events mark the year as one of special spiritual awakening.

Before the erection of the house of worship, or about 1770, the church had secured the services of Mr. Isaiah Potter, a young man of promise, then about twenty-two years of age. His labors were very acceptable; and in 1772, while the meeting-house was being built, he was ordained and installed over the church as its first pastor. The services must have been particularly impressive. Under a wide-spreading elm tree, that stood by the road-side, on the grounds now occupied by Mr. Thomas Eastman, a hundred rods or so south of this place, a stage had been erected on which the services were to take place. The gently rising ground, from the temporary pulpit to the bank of the stream, afforded a fine opportunity for a congregation to gather, and witness and enjoy the scene.

It was an August day—the 25th—a season of the year suitable for an out-of-door service; that peculiar season when there comes the lull of nature, after the extreme heat of July; and when the very atmosphere seems in a meditative mood, and every shrub and leaf,

having attained the acme of its growth, becomes thoughtful and mindful of soberer days in the near distance. And then how impressive the surroundings! The dark bluff behind them, covered with the growth of centuries; the beautiful waters of the Connecticut in the foreground; nature's own Gothic around and above them, with the blue of heaven for a fresco. Sermon by the Rev. Mr. Olcott, of Charlestown.

At the close the pastor made an address, in which he exhorted his flock, the younger members especially, "to refrain from any vain amusements, dancing and the like, as altogether unsuitable to the occasion, though customary." Thus was constituted by far the most important pastoral relation that has existed in the history of this town. Mr. Potter was the pastor of *the town*, and his ministry continued forty-five years.

The house of worship was completed and dedicated in the autumn. Though a small, unpretending structure, glorious scenes were witnessed under its roof. Pentecostal blessings were poured out there. On the tenth (and, as it would appear, last) year of its occupancy, "on the 28th of April, fifty-three persons were received into the church, and not long after thirty-three more were added at one time." The church now numbered two hundred and four, with a population not exceeding five hundred.

A dear spot that first church must have been to many, and yet we are told that it was "about 1782"—

this very year—that the place of worship was transferred to the Aspinwall hill, one of the most elevated parts of the town then under cultivation. This transfer was not made without bitter strifes between the opposite sections of the town as to the location most desirable for the new structure. To end their strifes, or rather as their contribution to the questions in controversy, “a company of young men,” it is said, “gathered in the night, and proceeded quietly to remove the bone of contention, and before the morning light the house of worship was levelled to the ground.” This compelled the construction of a new house, which was built in a more central position, but one that obliged them all, in a literal sense, to “*go up to the house of the Lord.*”

Here, during another decade, Mr. Potter preached truth, and administered discipline, and held in one congregation all the people of the town.

But the inhabitants increasing “on the plain” (as the centre of the town was styled), and in the eastern section, a vote was carried, on the 9th of May, 1792, to build another house of worship—the third house—at the centre, on grounds now enclosed in the present park. This was used both for purposes of worship and town purposes. In 1850 it was removed from the public grounds to the north side of the street. In 1868 it passed into the hands of the town exclusively, and was remodelled into the present town hall.

In this third house Mr. Potter continued to preach some twenty-five years, having outlived the two former houses, and one third the age of the new house, wanting a single year.

I cannot leave this portion of the church history of the town without calling attention to the liberal expenditures of the fathers in providing a house for the Lord. With a wise reference to the growth and convenience of the population, they built three structures under one pastorate, and in the space of about twenty-two years, the last of which, being 50 by 60 feet on the ground, is said to have cost £1,447 5s.

They "devised liberal things," for their age and circumstances, and God blessed them, and prospered the church, and gathered into it no less than three hundred and seventy-two souls, of whom twelve became ministers of the gospel.

The next page we turn in the church history of Lebanon, like Ezekiel's roll, is "covered with lamentations and mourning and woe." It introduces us to the calling and settlement of a brilliant man to the pastorate; but a man of "broad church" proclivities, who, if he did not sow the seeds of evil, was at least indisposed to root them up. He was, moreover, under censure for various immoralities when settled. What could have been expected but the divisions that followed, resulting in the withdrawal of the majority of

the church from the ordinances as administered by Mr. Foord, and the settlement of a new pastor, after several years of strife—the Rev. Calvin Cutler. During his ministry the town assumed the control of the meeting-house, and apportioned the use of it to the four different denominations that then existed,—the old church that had seceded, the adherents of Mr. Foord, the Universalists, and the Baptists. This state of things continued until 1828, when the church erected the present house of worship, which was dedicated on the 13th of August, leaving the old meeting-house in the hands of the other denominations and the town, until its transformation into the present town hall, as before stated.

The church is free again. By the liberality of Dea. Nathaniel Porter, they are provided with a parsonage and some two acres of land under and adjoining. They have paid for their house of worship, and raised a fund of a thousand dollars towards the support of the gospel. They want a pastor. They find one, evidently sent them by the Lord, in the person of the Rev. Phineas Cooke, who ministered to them nineteen years, during which two hundred and thirty-three members were added to the church. As the fruits of a special work of grace in 1835, sixty-nine members were brought in in a single year.

We are approaching the period when our own church came into being. A few words will be in place

respecting the reasons that seemed to justify the new organization.

The house of worship, which was at first in this vicinity, by successive removals was now four miles from the western limits of the town.

The valley of the Connecticut, on the New Hampshire side, was quite thickly settled from Hanover to Plainfield, and all the population were from four to five miles from church. Besides, this place had been chosen as the terminus of the Northern Railroad, causing an increase of permanent and transient residents, settling the question of a future village on this soil, and bringing the population on the opposite bank of the Connecticut into more intimate relations with us. Added to these considerations, there was another that hastened the movement, and was, indeed, the immediate occasion of it—the dismission of Mr. Cooke, on the 13th of May, 1848. Nine days after the dissolution of the council that dismissed Mr. Cooke (for the church agreed to submit the matter to their decision), there was held a meeting at the house of Oliver Stearns, at which ten members of the church were present, viz., Richard Kimball, Ebenezer Kimball, Henry G. Wood, John Wood, Thomas Wood, Oliver Stearns, Daniel Richardson, Elias H. Richardson, and Aruna Hall. Duly organized by the choicer of Richard Kimball as chairman, and Elias H. Richardson as scribe, they passed the four following votes:

“*Voted*, To appoint a committee to select a site for a meeting-house, somewhere in West Lebanon, to be improved at some suitable time.

“*Resolved*, That we go on unitedly and support the gospel at the Centre as heretofore, until the times shall demand a separation from the church at the Centre.

“*Voted*, The secretary be empowered to call the next meeting when required; after which,

“*Voted*, To adjourn without day.”

These are the first records on our church books. They indicate that the establishment of a church and the erection of a house of worship in this part of the town was a foregone conclusion in the minds of the members here residing. They wait the favorable moment.

The committee chosen to select a site for the meeting-house, made choice of the location where we are now assembled, which was purchased of Mr. Gideon Dickinson.

The land on which the parsonage stands was bought of Mr. Samuel S. Barrows. This house was raised in the following June,—Prof. Haddock, of Dartmouth college, delivering an address and offering a prayer. Remarks were also made by Rev. Charles A. Downs, who was then stated supply of the church.

We come now to the autumn of 1849. The house of worship (which cost the society about \$3,500) is ready to be dedicated. Thirty-seven members of the church have applied for and received letters of dismission, with a view to the organization of a new church. Seven other brethren and sisters, from churches in Fort Covington, N. Y., Conway and

Richmond in this state, Pulaski, Ill., and Lowell, Boston, and Hadley, Mass., were confederate with them. All these—forty-four in number—united in calling a council, for the double purpose of dedicating this house and constituting the church.

Council met on the 8th of November, 1849,—twenty-five years ago to-day. There were present “from the church at Dartmouth college, Rev. Jno. Richards, pastor, Rev. John W. Noyes, delegate, and Rev. Prof. Haddock; from the church in Plainfield, Rev. Jacob Scales, pastor, and Dea. Stephen Tracy, delegate; from the church in Hartford, Vt., Rev. Josiah Merrill, pastor, Bro. Jno. Strong, delegate; from the church in Meriden, Rev. Amos Blanchard, pastor, Bro. C. S. Richards, delegate; from the church in Lebanon, Rev. Chas. A. Downs, pastor elect, Dea. Abner Allen, delegate.”

The doings of the church were approved, the articles of faith and covenant were heard and commended, the council, however, recommending the addition of two or three specifications to the former.

The prayer of dedication was offered by the Rev. Jno. Richards. Prof. Haddock preached the sermon. The moderator of the council—the Rev. Jacob Scales—read the articles of faith and covenant, the church assenting thereto. The prayer of consecration was then offered by the Rev. Amos Blanchard, followed by an address to the church by the moderator.

It was a solemn but joyful day to the Christians of West Lebanon, and its events are destined to have a greater prominence in the annals of eternity than they have had in the records of time. They are passing from the memories even of the fathers and mothers who participated in them. But let them recall them vividly to-day, and tell them to their children, that they may catch the inspiration that animated them, in carrying on the work which they so wisely initiated. Let them recount to-day the zeal and liberality and words of wisdom of that venerable man,* who was ninety years old the very day the church was constituted and the house of worship dedicated, but who lived more than ten years thereafter, attaining to the great age of one hundred years, one month, and nine days.

But I am reminded that the history of twenty-five years is yet before us. I trust I have thrown so much light upon forthcoming scenes, by recalling the series of events that ushered them in, that I may be brief in the recital of them.

The church lost no time in organizing. Two days after the adjournment of the council, Nov. 10th, it met in the vestry—the present gallery—chose its moderator and scribe, and appointed “a committee to wait on Mr. Samuel Craft, of Brookline, Mass., and

* Joseph Wood, who gave \$1000 to the society as a fund for the support of the gospel.

tender to him the thanks of the church for his making so valuable a present to the church,—being an elegant communion set, a splendid Turkey-bound Bible, and table-cloth." This was their first item of business.

On the 27th of December they chose three deacons,—Samuel Wood, Nathan B. Stearns, and David Richardson. In 1868 Charles H. Dana was appointed to the same office. All these, with the exception of Dea. Richardson, who left town soon after his appointment, have "used the office of a deacon well" to the present time, "and purchased to themselves a good degree."

There has been preserved the first notice given in the church respecting future services, read, no doubt, at the meeting of council before its adjournment. It is as follows:

"The sale of slips for one year in this house will take place on Sat. next, at one o'clock in the afternoon.

"By the leave of Divine Providence religious services will be holden in this house on next Lord's day. Exercises to commence at half past ten in the morning.

"The congregation who expect to worship at this place are respectfully invited to remain during the first half hour of the intermission of next Sabbath, for the purpose of organizing a Sabbath-school."

Sabbath-school instruction was not a novelty in this part of the town, for the Rev. Mr. Cook had gathered classes for Biblical instruction. And, subsequently, Mrs. Eunice M. Hutchinson assembled the children at her own residence, and taught them out of the

Scriptures. Afterwards this school was removed to Union hall, where it was kept up by other laborers until the times of which we are speaking. In the notice above referred to we have the origin of the *church school*, which has been continued until the present, and regarded as one of the most important means of religious culture enjoyed by this population. It has been reorganized under a new constitution during the past year, and now numbers about one hundred and forty members.

Between the dedication of the church and the settlement of a pastor, services were regularly sustained on the Sabbath by the professors of Dartmouth college, and ministers from abroad who were invited to preach as candidates for the pastorate, of whom, I am informed, there were not less than a score.

On the 3d of May, 1850, it was "Voted, To extend a call to the Rev. Lathrop Taylor, of Springfield, Vt., but on account of a letter received from Mr. Taylor immediately after the meeting, the call was never sent to him.

There is documentary evidence that a second (perhaps informal) call was voted to another candidate; but I find no reference to it in the records.

On the 18th of January, 1851, the Rev. Rufus Case, who was then supplying the pulpit at Burlington, Vt., reached here, by invitation from the committee of supply, to spend two Sabbaths with the people. The

Lord turned the hearts of all toward him as a suitable person to become their pastor and teacher. A unanimous call was forwarded to him, on the 27th of February, from the church, the society, and the pew-holders, each body having taken separate action.

Mr. Case's final answer was not received until the following June; but in the correspondence which passed meantime he says,—

“There are several reasons which incline me to think it is duty to accept the invitation. An important one is the unanimity with which the invitation is given. I think it is rather remarkable that the people should be so far united in giving calls. This is the third which has been given unanimously, and there is reason to fear that should you fail now, the people may become divided.”

Wednesday, the 26th of June, was another red-letter day in the history of Lebanon,—the installation of Mr. Case as the first pastor of the new church, Rev. John Wheeler, D. D., president of the University of Vermont, preaching the sermon. Thus was constituted a pastorate that continued almost eleven years, that was rich in the fruits of faithful work done in laying foundations and building thereon. There were added to the church during these years seventy-six names,—forty-one upon profession of their faith, and thirty-five by letter.

Mr. Case was dismissed on the 12th of March, 1862. The record of the council says,—“His sole reason for seeking dismissal was ill health, the church reluctantly assenting on that ground.” The council “com-

mended him to the confidence and affection of all the churches, as a wise, faithful, and good minister of the gospel.*

An interregnum of nearly eleven months followed, in which the pulpit was filled, as at the first, mainly by professors from Hanover and ministerial candidates. Greatly favored has this church and parish been in its supplies. And it must be said, to their credit, that they have not been made fastidious, exacting, and hard to please; they have not become intellectual epicures, like some parishes we wot of, who have reached a confirmed dyspepsia, that reluctantates all wholesome food, and relishes only condiments. They have valued stability and a regular pastorate.

They are praying then in this interval for a pastor. They are lonely without a shepherd. Did not God hear their prayer, and raise up for them the man just adapted to the times?

On the 27th of July, 1862, at a meeting of the church called for the purpose, it was "*Voted*, That the committee of the society hold correspondence with the Rev. John H. Edwards, relative to his future supplying the desk for an indefinite time to come." Mr. Edwards entered upon the work. In September the terms of the vote were so changed as to read "for the term of six months." On the 15th of November

* In 1867 Mr. Case settled again in Jaffrey, N. H., where he still resides.

following, a unanimous vote was passed to extend to him a call to become pastor and teacher. In his answer to the call, Mr. Edwards expresses the thoughts that burden the heart of every true pastor:

"Solemn interests are committed to my charge. Blessed possibilities open before me. But you have made choice, for these high labors and responsibilities, of one frail and fallible like yourselves. Your labors must join his, your prayers must mingle in his behalf, and your sympathy must encourage and strengthen his heart, if his work is to be successful."

The services of ordination and installation occurred February 3, 1868, Dr. Leeds, of Hanover, preaching the sermon, and Rev. Chas. A. Downs, of Lebanon, giving the right hand of fellowship.

Mr. Edwards came to this parish in the ardor of his youth, and gave to this church the warmth of a first love. The council that sundered the pastoral relation on account of "the health of the pastor's family," after nearly eight years of devoted labor, say,—Mr. Edwards was "an able, faithful, and successful minister of the gospel." The church was established and built up under his labors, by the addition of one hundred and eighteen members, seventy-nine by profession and thirty-nine by letter. Happy the servant of Christ who has such a record, and who may hope to meet in eternity so many "seals of his ministry."*

It has seemed to me singular, that, after the loss of

* After laboring about two years in Tidioute, Penn., Mr. Edwards left the country for Europe, with his family, and has not yet returned.

so beloved a pastor, this people should so soon have united in the choice of his successor; especially that you should have extended another unanimous call from the church and society to one with whom you had had only a brief acquaintance, and without having heard other candidates. I felt, for this reason, that your call was the call of God; "Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying as soon as I was sent for." And so only four months and five days passed, after the council had dismissed the dear brother who preceded me, before you entertained another council to review our proceedings and join our hands in the sacred wedlock of pastor and people. It was the 17th of May, 1871,—the season of the year when all nature gives promise of growth; when foliage, flowers, and fruit seem to be waiting in readiness to appear, in quick succession, to reward the labor of the husbandman. We hoped these things might be a prophecy of speedy growth and abundant fruit in this church and parish. Our hopes have had only an indifferent realization. There have been added to us twenty-seven new members, strengthening our hands and cheering our hearts greatly. But how can we be satisfied when so many are yet without, and strangers to our precious Lord and Saviour?

A word more in reference to this council. The events of that day are yet fresh in our recollection. An able discourse was delivered by Rev. Charles R.

Palmer, of Salem, Mass.; the late Rev. Robert Southgate, with words of surpassing tenderness, gave the right hand of fellowship (who could have believed that right hand was so soon to be palsied in death); the charge to me was by Rev. S. P. Leeds, D. D.; the address to you by Prof. Henry E. Parker. The occasion was one of great interest to us all. I trust we shall never have good reason to regret its occurrence.

The history of this church would not be complete if I did not tabulate a few of the items that indicate the steps of its growth and its present membership.

Original members.....	44
Since added by profession.....	137
Since added by letter.....	109
Total number connected with it since its organization.....	290
Removed by death.....	44
Removed by letter.....	86
Present membership.....	160
Male members.....	54
Female members.....	106
Original members still living.....	12

Brethren, the work assigned to me is done. But how can I sit down without a word of congratulation and exhortation? The facts I have recited fully justify, in all your minds, the action of the fathers in founding this church. The evidence is abundant that God has been with you, and guided your endeavors. I read it in the wisdom that characterized all your acts in withdrawing from the parent church. It was a delicate duty to do, and not prejudice your relations with your brethren at the Centre. But I find, all

along, the record of the kind offices of the parent for her offspring,—the transfer to the new society of assets to the amount of \$133 towards building this house, and the presence of the church by pastor and delegate in all your councils. I read it in the unanimity of your action in the settlement of all your pastors, every call being *unanimous*. I read it especially in the record of revivals which you have enjoyed. Two of these must have been of great power. The first was under the pastorate of Rev. Mr. Case, in 1857, a year memorable for revival influences throughout the land. Some of you cannot have forgotten the 5th of July of that year, when thirty-four stood side by side in this place to enter into covenant with God and his people. The next special work occurred in the winter of 1865-6; for, during the following summer, thirty were added upon profession of their faith. This was under the labors of Rev. Mr. Edwards. I have called to mind the joys of those revival seasons, and am prepared to join with you to-day in the exulting word of the Jewish bard,—“The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” And I cannot withhold the inquiry, Why may we not enjoy again these seasons of refreshing, of joy transcending all other joy this side heaven? You remember, brethren, the “searchings of heart,” the healing of divisions, the personal labor with one another, the purifying of yourselves from all known

sin, the new consecration of yourselves with all your powers to the service of God, that preceded those works of grace. Will you "prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight," as in former days, and see again the salvation of God? It is related in the annals of Dartmouth college, that when Messrs. Temple and Goodale, of missionary celebrity, with a few other students, resolved "that they would every day talk, each with some student or other person whom they judged unconverted, and urge them to Christ," there soon occurred a season of "universal religious interest, and in one week more than forty expressed joyfully the Christian hope, and in four weeks sixty students and sixty citizens were supposed to be converted."

O that God would come in like manner to this community, and this seminary, and fill all our hearts and homes, and all heaven, with joy!

In this review of the religious history of the town, no feature has been more conspicuous than the readiness of the fathers to make sacrifices for the promotion of the cause of Christ. When the colony numbered only twenty families, they took measures to secure the preaching of the gospel. Under one pastorate, to meet the growth and convenience of the settlement, they built three houses of worship. When the church was compelled, for the purity of the faith, to leave the house they had helped to build in other

hands, they raised the commodious structure now occupied by the parent church, and funded a thousand dollars to support the gospel in the days to come. And when the founders of this church responded to the manifest call to give the gospel to all the population on this border of the town, they threw their free-will offerings together, and, finding they had raised between three and four thousand dollars, entered vigorously upon the work of building this house. And the venerable patriarch, Joseph Wood ("for and in consideration of the love and interest I feel in the welfare of Christ's kingdom in the world," to quote his own words), gave the society \$1000 "for the support of the gospel ministry" in all coming time.

Thus, all along, the spirit of liberality has been manifested. God's people have shown that their property was converted as well as their hearts. They have called nothing of the means God had lent them their own, when he manifestly asked for it, to be invested in his service. The result is apparent in the intelligence, the morality, and the general prosperity of the population of the town. "Them that honor me I will honor," saith the Lord.

What is the inference? That *we* should take up and carry vigorously forward the work to be done in this age, to give the gospel in its freshness and power to all this population. I hear the fathers of three generations exhorting us to imitate their zeal in pro-

viding the institutions of religion for themselves, their wise forecast in laying foundations for their children. I hear the Saviour say,—“Imitate my example! Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

The steady increase of population here, the establishment of an institution of learning here, into which are constantly gathered from fifty to one hundred youth from abroad, to be helped or hindered, while with us, in the formation of their moral characters, make the obligations of to-day vastly greater than those which our fathers assumed twenty-five years ago.

While, then, we set up our stone of witness to-day, exclaiming, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,” let us gird ourselves *for work*. Are words of counsel demanded?—let them not be withheld. Are means wanted?—let the tythes be brought into the house of the Lord. Is there needed an all-pervasive influence to arouse the indifferent, give courage to the timid, and strength to the weak?—let all unite to create such an influence by word and act. Especially, let prayer aseend unceasingly to God that he will fulfil to us his promise to Jacob of old,—“I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”

P D 18 1



DOBBS BROS.
LIBRARY BINDING

AY 72
ST. AUGUSTINE
FLA.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 065 108 4

